



Bulletin de l'APAD

11 | 1996

Le développement négocié : courtiers, savoirs,
technologies (I)

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/apad/731>

ISSN: 1950-6929

Publisher

LIT Verlag

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 May 1996

Electronic reference

Dieter Neubert, « The role of local brokers in the development system. Experiences with "self-help projects" in East Africa », *Bulletin de l'APAD* [Online], 11 | 1996, Online since 02 July 2007, connection on 30 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/apad/731>

This text was automatically generated on 30 April 2019.

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Introduction

- 1 According to the definition of local brokers given in the call for papers for the conference, they are "social actors who belong to a local arena". Local brokers are situated "at the interface between the project's beneficiaries and the development agencies". They act between two different systems: the international system of development aid and the system of local communities. Therefore, local development brokers can be analysed from two perspectives.
- 2 One perspective is that of the local community, the other is that of the system of development aid. Usually local development brokers are considered as representatives of the local population and they are analysed as part of the local community. I will analyse them from the other angle, as part of the system of development aid.
- 3 The international system of development aid, which I will call briefly "the development system" has always used brokers. Starting from colonial policy the native local administration played that role, later after independence the local administration came in. Beside the administration there were other brokers: missionaries, ethnic associations or moderate African political leaders (Seeley 1985). But in the top-down approach of development policy their role was limited. The Africans who were part of the administration were seen as implementators not as real brokers. The other brokers representing the local communities directly or acting as advocates gave some helpful information on the beneficiaries, but the administration did not see them as real partners.
- 4 During the eighties, after a change in the rhetoric in development policy, the local development brokers became more important. After a number of failures and

disappointments in development, institution building is now one of the new slogans. The idea is to promote development through societal self-organisation as a part of a bottom-up approach. This is why NGOs and self-help groups are supported.

- 5 We should see the difference between two types of voluntary associations : *Self-help-groups* are mainly interested in the well-being of their group and follow mainly their own interest. Other organisations like *charities* adress themselves *mainly to non-members* and their work is in principle of *benefit for the public* (*gemeinnützig*). By *non-governmental-organisations* (NGOs), I mean only the latter type of organisation that works for non-members. NGOs, in this narrow sense of the term, are together with other development agencies very important supporters of self-help-groups.
- 6 The bottom-up approach should allow a more consequent needs orientation, the guarantee of participation and the strengthening of accountability to the beneficiaries. The rhetoric of grass-roots-oriented development agencies, like NGOs, draws a picture of a development utopia : small peasants and urban poor are organised in self-help-groups and take their fate in their own hands. The development starts from the grass-roots and will bring the change that we have awaiting for decades. These grass-root-groups earn our support, helping them means strengthening a healthy and well-founded sustainable development.
- 7 This new grass-roots development approach makes the interface between the local system and the international development system more important, because reaching the beneficiaries directly is now a target in itself. But how can the development agencies get in touch with the grass-roots ? The local administration has been accused of ignoring the people's needs and being an instrument of control instead of development. Therefore, other ways of getting in touch with grass-roots have to be found. This is where development brokers come in. They promise to help the development agencies in reaching the grass-roots.
- 8 The role of a broker implies two different images. A broker might be a necessary intermediate, somebody who brings people together, acting as a kind of catalyst. Brokers are also mistrusted as people who seek their own interest first. They misuse their special position and cheat one or even both of their clients. To put it extremely, they are *catalysts* or *parasites*. Talking of rent seeking behaviour at a local level or of patron-client relationships points out the negative image of a broker whose role is at best ambiguous.
- 9 This kind of question might lead us to the personality of the brokers, their moral standards and their embeddedness into local social relationships. But this is not my intention. I want to understand the local development brokers as part of the development system. I will deal with two main questions From this perspective my first question is : Who are the brokers at the local level ? We will see that the role of a broker must not only be played by born members of the local community, they can be played by outsiders, too. We have to state that a simple three actor model i.e. beneficiaries-broker-development agency is not sufficient in reality, we have a chain of brokers or patron-client relationships.
- 10 My second question is : How do the brokers fit into the development system ? The role of brokers should be evaluated from the perspective of the development system using the targets of the bottom-up approach promoted in the development rhetoric. Brokers are now an established element of the development policy. At first glance, they seem to be quite successful at linking beneficiaries to the development system. The picture changes

when taking the target of development agencies seriously. The brokers help to produce the reality the development system is looking for. The result is a kind of distorted societal self-organisation which cannot overcome structural problems of the development system.

- 11 The findings presented here are based on an extensive field study in Kenya and Rwanda. I conducted the study that focussed on the work of mostly African NGOs in the 80s and at the beginning of the 90s, that is to say before the war in Rwanda (Neubert 1994 ; 1995). My study included some governmental and international development agencies. With regards to the role of local brokers there was no typical difference between NGOs and other types of agencies.

Types of brokers

- 12 The great number of self-help groups shows a quantitative success of the grass-roots approach. The figures are impressive : In Kenya, there are somewhere between 15,000 and 26,000 self-help groups (Barkan/Holmquist 1989 : 360 ; Fowler 1989 : 7) and in Rwanda there were 15,000 groups with about 500,000 members (IWACU 1989 : 1) which was equivalent to 15 % of the population (over 15 years).
- 13 In the bottom-up approach, the creation of self-help groups should be supported and the groups must be linked to the development system. This concludes some basic elements for the NGOs and other development agencies. In the self-perception of the grass-roots oriented development agencies, the co-operation between the agency and a grass-root group starts with an agreement of co-operation. According to bottom-up approach, the people themselves have to solve their own problems and use their own resources. The development agencies want to play only the role of a supporter or a facilitator only. They cannot deal with every individual, but groups can be supported. The people should be strong as a groupe in those cases where groups already exist, the agency and the group have to clarify their joint project. Therefore, the promotion of self-help should start with a *needs assessment*. The fieldworkers of the supporting NGO should discuss the groups' needs with them, make priorities and develop an appropriate project. The project can start after this needs assessment in the self-perception of the agencies, this first phase of the process is of extreme importance and a couple of negotiation sessions are needed. A staff member of a Rwandan NGO put this notion in a brief statement : "Ce sont les paysans qui décident".
- 14 It is highly important for development agencies that follow this self-help approach to avoid so called "gift projects". These are projects in which groups that do not contribute substantially to the project receive support (financially or with goods) by the agency (Crombrugghe/Bitega 1988 : 20). Even if the group members are poor, they should prove their interest in the project through contributions in kind or work.
- 15 In practice, the initial phase of self-help projects is different. The development agencies are not dealing with all group members but with representatives of the groups who are called "peasant leaders" or even with local administrators or notables. "Peasant leaders", administrators and notables act as brokers. Mostly the development agencies do not reflect the special role of these brokers. Sometimes they do not even notice that brokers are involved. Additionally, the agencies take the existence of self-help groups for granted. This initiating phase of the projects includes two tasks, the organisation of the group and the installation of a linkage between groups and the development agency. Simple brokerage is not sufficient to initiate a project the groups have to be founded and

organised. Therefore, many of the so called brokers initiate the groups and act as intermediaries to the development agency at the same time.

- 16 If we looking at East Africa, a variety of brokers or initiators can be seen. A study of local self-help groups in Kenya called harambee-groups gives some empirical data about the founders of self-help groups. Only about a quarter were peasants or artisans, a somewhat bigger group were community development assistants and staff of the local administration. The biggest group consisted of teachers, businessmen, priests or clerks (Mbithi/Rasmusson 1977 : 57). In Rwanda, two-thirds of the group founders were peasants (including some artisans), the other groups were founded by administrative staff, priests and other professionals (IWACU 1987 27 ; Nzisabira 1992 : 183).
- 17 Self-help groups consisting of peasants are not always initiated and founded by peasants. The same applies to groups of artisans. A substantial proportion of the founders comes from "outside" the self-help group. Especially in the case of groups with some success and long lasting activities, outsiders are involved in the foundation of the group. They accompany the development process of the group, stabilise and push the group forwards. I will call these people "promoters". Mostly, the promoter acts also as the broker who makes contact with the development agency. Due to the work of the promoters, the development agencies find not only self-help groups but organised local partners also.
- 18 In Kenya, the role of promoters is frequently played by the local middle class. In Rwanda, the situation is somewhat different. Successful promoters are in many cases expatriates (Europeans, North Americans) such as priests or volunteers working in development projects and who deal with the self-help groups along with their main job. One reason is that the middle class in Rwanda is very small. Expatriates hold quite a number of middle class positions in the local communities (i.e. technicians, nurses, medical doctors, priests). They act at the same time as brokers between the local communities and the development agencies and as advocates of the local community. Additionally, in Kenya, one can find a great number of African associations like independent churches, independent schools and other voluntary associations. Thus, Kenya has been gaining good organisational experiences since colonial times. In Rwanda, experiences in self-organisation were blocked by the administration until the seventies.
- 19 Some of the local promoters created a network of self-help groups, local projects, schools, community centres or health facilities. These activities might be only informally linked. In other cases, they are put together to form a unified organisational structure with own staff and formalised administrative structures. Again the promoters of Rwandan networks of this type are very often expatriates. A few of these networks and their promoters were known even in other parts of the country (the co-operative "Kiaka" promoted by J.P. Godding, the projects of Father Maurer in Ruhengeri or of Father de Schaetzen in Kabgayi). This organisational process may even lead to the creation of a development agency legally registered as an NGO (association sans but lucratif, asbl) ¹.
- 20 Successful promoters must have the confidence of the people. They must understand people's attitudes, ideas and perspective and above all they must motivate and inspire their followers. One requirement is a personal authority combined with integrity. Those expatriates who play this role have lived for a long time (years or even decades) in the local community. They are part of the community and at least in the beginning, they were not full-time promoters and had another function, e.g. as priest ². These promoters can wait with their activities until there is a chance to initiate an activity. They can react to

the local situation and are not under pressure to push group formation or projects immediately.

- 21 Up to this point, we have identified different types of brokers : First brokers and group initiators who are at the same time members of the so called target groups, i.e. peasants or local artisans who act as group members. The brokers of the second type live in the local community, too. But they come from outside the target groups like local middle class people or expatriates who live in the community.
- 22 There is also a third type of broker : Some of the development agencies try to act directly as local promoters and group initiators and place own community workers into the community (in Rwanda : ARDI ; DUHAMIC-ADRI ; in Kenya : Institute of Cultural Affairs ; Gikonyo 1982 ; Miller 1983). These community workers are full-time professionals and act as full-time promoters. They have to concentrate all their efforts on self-help promotion. Limited in time, they are under pressure to present results. They cannot wait until the right opportunity for a project comes, they have to act immediately. A stay of some weeks or even some months in a rural community is not long "enough to let confidence, trust and authority grow. The position of these community workers in the community is based mainly on the support they can offer in the form of goods, money or services.
- 23 The different types of promoters or brokers mentioned are not clearly separated. In some cases, different brokers and promoters can be involved. A local group might be initiated by a missionary, organised by a local clerk, led by a "peasant leader", registered, looked after by the local administration and be at the same time the local partner for more than one development agency. Probably a local project-network or NOO acts as an intermediate for a World Bank or UNDP project. Especially, dynamic groups can find more than one partner and all agencies, promoters or brokers involved with the group feel responsible for it's success. (One group in Rwanda complained that in one week they had to come together every day to meet their different partners).
- 24 The simple three actor model i.e. beneficiaries-broker-development agency is not sufficient. In Many cases there is a number of people involved in the organisational process of self-help groups and projects including initiators, leaders, promoters, local brokers, different fieldworkers of development agencies related in a network. These networks are structured hierarchically as kind of patron-client relationships that reach from the grass-roots to the head office of the international donors (Müller 1992). Looking for broker competition we do not have only competition between "old" brokers and "new" brokers but also competition between different new brokers, like local peasant leaders, local project staff, missionaries, expatriate volunteers or administrators, local intellectuals, and some indigenous NGOs. I will not follow this line further because my focus is the role of the brokers in the development system.

The role of brokers in the development system : catalysts or parasites ?

- 25 Promoters or brokers take a part in the work of development agencies at the grass-roots, even though the development agencies do not realise that local promoters or brokers are involved. That brokers are there does not mean that they are always helpful and efficient. From the perspective of the development aid system, we have to ask whether they fit into the development system. Do they support the work of the development agencies ? Do they really fulfil their function of brokerage between the target groups and the development agencies ? Or do brokers have more selfish motives and follow their personal interests ? To put it bluntly, are they catalysts or parasites ?

- 26 When evaluating the efficiency of brokers in terms of the development agency and the development aid system we should keep the development targets in mind e.g. promotion of self-help and self-organisation, need orientation, participation and the strengthening of accountability to the beneficiaries.
- 27 If one asks the NGOs whom they prefer as speaker of the grass-roots, they name the so called peasant leaders. Peasant leaders seem to be the best brokers because they indicate real self-organisation and the expression of felt-needs of the target groups. But as already mentioned in "successful" and bigger self-help projects of development agencies the brokers are very often members of the local middle class, professionals or even expatriates.
- 28 This type of broker is usually criticised. They are suspect of following their individual interests, misusing their position as brokers to maximise the local power base and bypassing the needs of poor peasants (Tendler 1982 : 25-28). One typical consequence of the development agencies is to find the "real" leaders who should act as brokers and guarantee real participation and real need orientation.
- 29 This solution identifies the problem from the local communities' side. If they are organised properly and present honourable brokers full of integrity, then the development targets could be fulfilled. Based on this attitude, the individual self-interest of the brokers, their rent-seeking behaviour is seen as one important reason for disappointing results of self-help projects. Looking more profoundly into the development system and the organisational logic of the development system, the problem must be stated differently.
- 30 To understand the development system better we should look into the reality of self-help promotion. The core idea of self-help promotion is the support of a process of self-organisation. Groups should come together, discover their own resources and take their fate in their own hands. The projects should only push a little bit, help them to become organised and draw back afterwards. Aid in goods, money or services should only supplement the process of self-organisation.
- 31 If we look at the experiences made in Kenya and Rwanda, we can see that aid in goods, money or services is in fact dominant. When a self-help group contacts a development agency or when people are willing to organise themselves following a request from outside as a self-help-group, then the group usually waits for direct aid in terms of goods, money and sometimes in services. They are not interested in support for self-organisation. This is no surprise. What the groups lack is money or goods. The creation of this type of groups is a kind of "collective petition" to the development agency.
- 32 These self-help-projects do not live up to the ideal of a self-organising group using own resources for development. These projects are at first a means of distribution of services and goods. Therefore, they should at least follow the peoples' needs. But in reality, the groups are interested in getting *any kind of help* and they will take what ever they get. For them, it is reasonable to see what kind of projects the development agency might deliver and adapt their needs to this supply. They will try to show the right priorities to keep in touch with the agency. The experienced groups can see from the organisation's name at the car what they should present as their "needs" (see: the drawing at the end). Community health is not always one of the most wanted services, especially when this will not lead to a health centre that operates free of charge. In many areas of Rwanda,

even the provision of clean water is not a high priority, especially when there is already some water. The way to the tap with clean water might be longer than the way to the river or creek, and sometimes the tapped water has to be paid for.

- 33 Briefly : The supply of the development agency is the main factor for the expression of a so called "felt-need". This turns the idea of a needs assessment upside down.
- 34 What the development agencies really offer reflects mostly the perspective of the North on urgent needs of the population. If we want to get an idea of what the people really want, we have to look at projects which are organised by the groups using their own money. In Rwanda and some years ago in Kenya also you could find parents associations who founded their own primary or secondary schools. Only you can hardly ever find a development agency which is willing to promote a traditional school-project ³.
- 35 The self-help projects not only miss the felt-needs of the people, they also have problems reaching their target group, the "poorest of the poor". This is not at all surprising. To participate in self-help, to mobilise its own resources is only possible when the people already have some resources. This is definitely not the case for the poorest of the poor ⁴. Even labour might be scarce in very poor families, like in the case of women with children, who are mostly occupied to feed and care for the family. The promising self-help projects, and there are promising ones, are mostly run by lower middle-class members or "better off" poor people. The poorest group might only gain through paid low income jobs in the project.
- 36 The self-help groups who use the support supply do not meet the targets of the development policy. This is not the result of selfish brokers who block the access of the development agencies to "real" self-help groups. The problem lies in the preconceived ideas and opinions of the development agencies about "real needs" and possibilities of the self-help approach.
- 37 Additionally, the development agencies working at the grass-roots level are under pressure from the development system that makes the implementation of self-help projects even more complicated. Development agencies who want to work at the grass-roots level must have access to it. They need self-help groups as partners in order to prove their efficiency and their success. Once the development agency receives a grant for a project, the money has to be used in the planned time schedule. In these cases, the development agencies must find a local partner immediately. There is no time for a needs assessment or to check the capabilities of the group. Once all local partners have been identified, the development agency has no additional resources left and there is no interest at all in finding new groups. Even an extremely promising group will not have a chance of receiving support. It is especially the situation of the development agency that determines the chances of a group of becoming part of a grass-roots development program.
- 38 The chance that the expectations of the group and those of the development agency concur depends on the possibilities and approach of the development agency. Agencies who have funds for direct support in goods or money meet mostly the wishes of the groups. These agencies will find local partners easily. But this is an unusual situation because support like this would be a "gut project" that should be avoided.
- 39 Usually, the development agency has special project ideas, such as the promotion of new farming techniques, small credit schemes or a whole bundle including agricultural extension service and community work. Grants in money or in the form of goods are seen

only as incentives. In theory, the needs assessment should clarify whether the group and the agency can come together or not. Usually instead of a needs assessment a special kind of negotiation process takes place. As a result, the expectations of the agency and of the group are shaped until they match. The development agency accepts the necessity of aid in the form of money or goods and the group takes the kind of project the agency offers ; no matter whether the project meets their own priorities (Mazimpaka et al. 1990 : 35 ; Mutaru 1991 : 43). In the course of this process, the brokers can prove their capabilities.

- 40 This process of project installation has nothing to do with idea of participation and need orientation. At best, the development agency, supported by the broker shapes non specified needs for aid into a project. In most cases, a co-operation takes place when a development agency that is looking for local partners happens to meet a group willing and experienced enough to adapt to the pro gram of the agency. Projects are mostly not the result of a rationally planned process of project identification but the outcome of uncontrolled coincidence.
- 41 The special logic of this process can be shown using a concept from the theory of organisation, the "garbage can model of organisational choice" (Cohen/March/Olsen 1972). The model describes a situation where "choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be an answer..." (ibid. 2). Applying this concept to the process of project identification at the grass-roots level, we may talk of a "garbage can model of project identification".
- 42 Local development brokers act in this "garbage can" by looking for problems which match the solutions of the development agencies. "Effective" brokers present problems (or needs) that the agency is willing to meet. The skill of the brokers is to select elements of the reality that fit into the agency's program. They shape reality into a form that suits the development agency. In presenting grass-roots needs which meet the expectations of the development agency, the brokers strengthen the myth of grass-root orientation and self-organisation. They can make the agency believe, that the grass-roots are participating in project decisions.
- 43 In fact, the existence of brokers works against the grass-roots orientation and self-organisation. They risk being caught in an "authority trap" and becoming mere transmitters of the development agencies ideas. For the local community, a successful broker is somebody who gets resources because he knows what needs should be presented. Being successful creates authority, which is especially strong in the case of brokers who are not members of the target groups and who already have a higher status in the local community.
- 44 The danger lies in the possibility that the groups rely on the local broker who has the real decision making power and not the elected chairpersons ⁵. This does not mean that the projects and the activities are not successful. In many cases, the brokers or promoters are practising an "enlightened top-down approach" (Tendler 1982 : 15) The broker or promoter decides what is to be done and might realise useful projects together with the group. There is no guarantee that the brokers or promoters always follow the needs and interests of the people. They might block participation to save their position or try to gain some political or financial advantage from their position (Bierschenk/Elwert/Kohnert 1993 : 98f).

- 45 Inside the development system, all brokers have the task of adapting the group's expectations and activities to the development agencies' approach. The brokers are dependent on the agency because the authority of the brokers in the groups is based on the access to the support of the agency.
- 46 From the question of independence, some old fashioned mostly expatriate brokers have some strategic advantages. Missionaries or (long rime) expatriate volunteers receive more confidence by overseas donors than indigenous brokers. Expatriate brokers may shape programs of donors. Some of them have access to alternative resources which are not completely dominated by the development policy discourse (supporter groups, third world groups). These brokers have the chance of listening to local needs and following local priorities. Therefore, some of their projects are far better suited to the felt-needs of the population. But they cannot escape the authority trap. Because of their access to resources they are even more uncontrollable and criticising them openly is extremely difficult (Tendler 1982 : 25-28).

Conclusion

- 47 The question of whether brokers are catalysts or parasites is posed in the wrong way. They might be both or nothing of this. The structure of the development system in which the brokers are acting is the main factor influencing project decisions. The development system selects the brokers who fit into the system.
- 48 Brokers who are willing to challenge the ideas of the development agencies are rarely accepted. Not the felt-needs of the grass-roots presented by brokers are changing the approach of the development aid system but international fashions of development policy. Or how could the recent world-wide priorities in development policy of ecology and women's projects be explained ? There is no reason why poor people all over the world recognised the same needs at exactly the same rime.
- 49 The brokers are part of a supply-led-process (Fowler 1989 : 3) which creates self-help groups, and a set of needs that seem to be the outcome of an autonomous societal self-organisation.
- 50 This creates a special realm of development projects. The realm of development projects is part of community life, but community life is usually presented only distorted in the projects that guide the perception of the agencies.
- 51 Successful brokers present the agencies with the reality that the agencies are looking for. In this perspective, the brokers are brokers in definitions of reality. Brokers might present a "*real*" reality where a dynamic self-help group is really looking for outside support to strengthen their self-organisation, a very rare case in East Africa. In many cases brokers present a *shaped reality* where some needs of a community that fit into the program of a development agency are named as the priorities and some community members might form a "self-help group". In other cases the broker presents a *phantom reality*. The term phantom reality follows Goffman's term of a phantom normalcy (Goffman 1967 : 152) that describes a special element of an interaction process. People are willing to act as if both actors were normal, to make the process of interaction easier even in cases where both actors know that one of them is not normal. In the same way here the agency might know or guess that the presented reality is a fake, but the agency is willing to accept it, to make the project go. To give an example : To present the desired self-help group, a group of self-employed artisans calls themselves a co-operative, or a small

entrepreneur declares his employees as members of a co-operative and himself as the chairperson.

- 52 In all cases of reality presentation, brokers are successful viewed from both perspectives. The development agency has the local partners with the "right" needs, and the local community has at least some project. The bargain is perfect. In this sense, brokers are catalysts who facilitate what both sides want : "a project".
- 53 At the same time brokers, assessed on a more personal and moral level might be parasites as well. Ideally, brokers should work for nothing with political or humanitarian motivation. The authority trap shows that even without payment, they may get a reward that works against the development targets. Brokers can gain much more than authority, they could manage to be preferred beneficiaries of the program. They might be employed as local project staff or even misappropriate projects funds. There are extreme cases possible where the broker tries to channel all the outside support into his own pocket or the local groups do not exist at all. Except for large scale misappropriation of funds, all other personal gains of brokers are usually acceptable for the development agencies.
- 54 For the development system, the catalyst role as broker of reality is the main one, and in this role the development brokers are successful. But this is a cynical conclusion. Obviously all discussed types of brokers do not meet the targets of development policy sufficiently. Brokers do not strengthen participation. Need orientation with (weak) grass-roots brokers or weak professional brokers happens only in rare cases by chance or as a result of an uncontrollable enlightened top-down approach. The accountability to the local community is limited to the question, of whether they get a project or not. Accountability to development agencies means producing adequate projects.
- 55 The question of self-organisation is a little bit more complicated. The creation of self-help groups, the shaping of needs into projects and the existence of skilled brokers are signs of successful societal self-organisation. But this is a distorted self-organisation. The incentive is an outside supply of aid. The problem is not the existence of the brokers or the bad behaviour by some brokers, but the underlying organisational principle. The structures created by outside supply are shaped to get and use that supply controlled by outside agencies. These structures are not created for handling own problems under local control, at best they succeed in undermining outside control. Additionally, the projects and the network of brokers, group initiators and promoters form a parallel structure to already existing structures (e.g. traditional leaders, local administration).
- 56 The question is whether there are any choices for the development system. The main structural problem of development aid is the idea of planned development (Musto 1987 ; Neuben 1994 : 288-297). The notion is that development could be planned and implemented step-by-step. Organisation building is a part of this approach. To strengthen self-organisation is in principle a good idea, but the organisations should be designed to handle their own problems first and not only outside supply. If we take the target of self-organisation seriously, it is impossible to make a detailed plan how to realise self-organisation. Self-organisation means freedom to organise itself, to formulate own priorities and includes the right to make mistakes. This leads us to a core dilemma of the promotion of self-organisation. The targets and the result of successful societal self-organisation cannot be set by the donors. At the same time, the supported organisations or groups cannot insist on funding for all their activities. Self-help groups might choose due to their lack of experience an unreasonable prestigious project or choose activities doomed to failure. They will thus use the donors funds for the "wrong"

things. Radical ethnic or religious groups do not have a "right" to funds. Neither brokers, self-help groups nor representatives of local communities are always trustworthy, as the numerous local conflicts on the moral and integrity of group leaders and members show. This gives the donors a right to their own decision and a right to ask for accountability. But every funding decision, every target set for the use of funds is an external influence. As long as donors fund groups and organisations, they are responsible for their funding decisions. The question is the selection of funding criteria.

- 57 Keepin in line with the idea of societal self-organisation, donors should look for local structures that are able to handle mainly local problems. Brokers should be linked into a network of local control and accountability. In general, the promotion of self-organisation has to begin with more independence on the local level that leads us to local self-governance and local democracy, but this a long way to go.
- 58 Local communities must take an active role in the process. If they wish, they can reject unwanted aid. The refusal of aid is their strongest argument and can push donors into a real negotiation process. This is not only a theoretical possibility. At least, there are a few examples of local communities who did not accept offered aid (e.g. in Uganda). This was possible after a long civil war that created the feeling, that outsiders could not be trusted and the community had to stay on its own.
- 59 Additionally, there is no reason why efficiency and the assimilation of recent trends in the development policy must always be the most important criteria for donors. The strength of the non-governmental sector has been the variety of organisations and approaches. Only when donors go different ways, will we have the chance to develop or invent new approaches. Those who look for innovations must accept failure and they need plenty of patience.

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NOTES

1. These are the NGOs ADEHAMU, ADECOK, ADENY A. AJEMAC.
2. Sometimes however they become professionalised as a result of the process, like promoters who create local project networks or local development associations.
3. We have good reasons to hesitate, because the recurrent cost will limit all other activities in the future. But this argument does not follow the felt-needs of the people.
4. Poor people can only participate in a small credit scheme when the whole investment is covered by the credit scheme. Even in this case they face heavy problems. Sickness of a family member, or even school fees, or a school uniform for the children could not be

paid from the income. Usually some money from the business is used to cover these expenses. This money is lacking to refill the stock of the small business or to buy materials for production or to repay the loan. Without the possibility of building up some savings, all these small enterprises will face bankruptcy sooner or later.

5. This could be seen very clearly in two Rwandan local project networks that already had developed into local NGOs (ADEHAMU ; AJEMAC).

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